

25th April 1968 at Lake Momela. It is now in the British Museum (Natural History), and has been identified by Mrs. B. P. Hall.

*Cisticola robusta*, Stout Cisticola: Two collected specimens were sent to the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, and have been reported on by M. A. Traylor. They are unusually pale compared to specimens from the Kenya highlands, though a few do approach them in pallor. Furthermore, five other specimens from northern Tanzania (Monduli, Loliondo and vicinity of Kili-manjaro), in the British Museum (Natural History) which were lent to Traylor could not be separated at all from paler Kenya specimens. There is therefore no justification for recognising a distinct subspecies.

*Hirundo senegalensis* and *smithii*, Mosque and Wire-tailed Swallows: Shortly after the first buildings in the Park were completed in 1963, pairs of *Hirundo smithii* arrived to nest on the walls. After the first brood or two had been raised, pairs of *senegalensis* arrived and took over newly completed nests, which they enlarged for themselves. This did not deter the smaller swallows, who started building again nearby on the same walls. In one case, where the nest of a pair of *H. smithii* was taken over, the original owners built their new nest onto the side of the almost completed nest of the pair of *H. senegalensis*. When the larger birds completed their nest they were ousted by a pair of *Apus caffer* White-rumped Swifts. The result was that the two pairs of birds, *Apus caffer* and *H. smithii*, reared their young in adjacent nests with no gap between them, despite continual bickering. It is also interesting to note that these two nests were inside the gate-house, which was completely shut up at dusk (19.00 hrs.) and not opened until after dawn (06.30 hrs.).

*Buphagus* sp., Oxpecker: Both *B. africanus* and *erythrorhynchus* occur. On a date unrecorded, several individuals of one or the other were seen on a giraffe *Giraffa camelopardalis* at 22.00 hrs., thus more than three hours after sunset. This agrees with the observation by Dowsett (1968), who found that both species occasionally roost on game animals at night.

On one occasion one or the other species has been seen to attempt to alight on a bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*, an abundant species in the Park. The bushbuck objected, and shook the oxpecker off. Attwell (1966: 33) was unable to give any record in nature of such an association.

#### References:

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## An African Pitta, *Pitta angolensis longipennis*, from Ethiopia by Emil K. Urban & T. Hakanson

Received 9th November, 1970

On 3rd July 1970 in the main rain season (June-September) of Ethiopia an African Pitta, *Pitta angolensis longipennis* (Reichenow), was collected in a forest of young eucalyptus, 10 km west of Addis Ababa, 2,440 m, 9° 3' N., 38° 40' E.

A small local boy observed the bird at 11 a.m. hopping on the ground under the trees which were 10 m tall. He shot the bird with a sling-shot and brought it to Mr. S. Pohlstrand, Addis Ababa, who kindly prepared the specimen and presented it to the Biology Department (Natural History Museum), Haile Sellassie I University, Addis Ababa. The specimen is a male (gonads "very small"; immature?) with culmen 22 mm; wing 122; tarsus 34; rectrix 34.

The record, the first for the species in Ethiopia (Urban and Brown, in press), is either that of a vagrant or is representative of a considerable extension in range. Benson and Irwin (1964) point out that the species is a long-distance migrant, breeding south of 8° S and migrating north to the vicinity of the equator in East Africa and to about 4° N in the Congo from April to September. These authors note that in East Africa the African Pitta has been recorded from Nairobi and Limuru in Kenya and Budongo, Bugoma, Mabira and Mulema in Uganda.

The Ethiopian specimen, therefore, extends the non-breeding range in eastern Africa approximately 900 km northward to approximately 9° N.

#### References:

- Benson, C. W. & Irwin, M. P. S. 1964. The migrations of the Pitta of Eastern Africa (*Pitta angolensis longipennis* Reichenow). *N. Rhodesia J.*, V (5): 465-475.  
Urban, E. K. & Brown, L. H. In press. *A checklist of the birds of Ethiopia*. Haile Sellassie I University Press, Addis Ababa.

## Further notes on the Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata* in East Africa

by J. S. S. Beesley

Received 10th October, 1970

Since discovering this bird in November 1965 in the Asogati (Kingerete) plain 30 miles north of Arusha, Tanzania (Benson, 1966), I have searched all the grass plains within a seventy mile radius of Arusha and have found it on only one other locality. This is a sloping plain between 4,800 and 5,100 feet above sea-level six miles west of Oldonyo Sambu village, which is 20 miles north of Arusha. This locality is ca. 12 miles from the Asogati plain. Both habitats are precisely the same regarding the soil and formation of grassland, and in detail dissimilar from all the other grass plains examined. In view of the bird's apparent rarity and its confinement to this very particular biotope, I now describe the habitat in detail.

The plains are situated to the north of Mt. Meru at an altitude between 4,500 and 5,100 feet above sea-level. The rainfall is very light, occurring only for a few days during the short and long rains of October-December and March-April. During the rest of the year very strong winds scour the area. The soil is calcimorphic, light and shallow, overlying a calcareous hard-pan, allowing only the development of an edaphic grassland. The grass is short with a leaf-table at 5-8 cm and culms rising to ca. 40 cm. Its coverage is about 50% and it grows in the form of cushions some 20-30 cm across, surrounded by wind-eroded channels of bare, hard, generally stoneless soil. These channels or lanes are used by the larks as pathways, along which they run, and may be important, for this fast-running bird does not frequent grassland lacking these channels or with large open areas between the grass cushions. The dominant grasses are *Digitaria macroblephara*, *Eustachys paspaloides*, and *Sporobolus marginatus*, also occurring are *Dactyloctenium* sp., and *Cyperus* spp. Other plants commonly